



Institutional Handbook of Operating Procedures
Policy 02.19.07

Section: General Administrative Policies and Services	Responsible Vice President: Vice President of Human Resources and Chief HR Officer
Subject: Computer/Information Services	Responsible Entity: Human Resources

I. Title
Use of Social Media

II. Policy

The University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB) recognizes the value of using social media to improve customer service; supplement official agency website information; solicit and gather feedback; keep customers informed of news, events, and opportunities; facilitate access to our services; and recruit and retain students and staff. Social media is a valuable tool for engaging all stakeholders and the general public.

When using social media, UTMB information and posts may only be disseminated through official, branded UTMB accounts on social media platforms (such as Facebook, Twitter, and blogs) by authorized UTMB personnel acting in an official capacity. UTMB employees authorized to conduct social media activities on the university’s behalf -- such as create a site and content, link to other content, follow, repost, or otherwise participate in social media activities -- must abide by all UTMB policies and practice standards.

In order to create and publish an official UTMB-sponsored social media site, a site developer (whether faculty, staff, or student) must receive institutional approval and must familiarize themselves with Guidelines for UTMB Health Social Media Accounts, which requires site planning, registration, user training, and monitoring, among other developer responsibilities. Official UTMB social sites must be approved by the designated contact(s) in the Office of Strategy and Communication before being established. Visit the Social Media Toolkit for additional information.

UTMB does NOT require registration or approval of social media accounts used by employees or students for personal use outside of the workplace. However, many rules and practice standards mapped out in this policy apply to both official and personal sites.

All parties must also abide by applicable state and federal laws, such as copyright and defamation laws, as well as the terms of service, terms of use, privacy policies, and other requirements of any communications platforms used.

This policy is an extension of IHOP Policy 2.19.6, Information Resources Security. UTMB information resource security policies and practice standards apply if accessing and/or posting to any social networking service while using UTMB-owned information resources and/or posting to UTMB sponsored sites.

The University of Texas Medical Branch, in compliance with applicable federal laws and regulations, strives to maintain an environment free from discrimination against individuals on the basis of race,

color, national origin, sex, age, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, genetic information, or veteran status.

III. Rules Governing UTMB Social Media

- No confidential information will be posted to any social media outlet. Doing so could result in legal action against the individual and UTMB. This includes, but is not limited to, Protected Health Information (PHI), which will not be posted unless it has been de-identified as outlined in IHOP 6.2.29, De-Identification of PHI. Social media is not a secure or appropriate platform for any sort of patient specific communication.
- The individual who is posting information must also ensure that no proprietary or confidential data are included in any images and that the activities depicted are consistent with UTMB's published policies. The posting of images depicting medical procedures or patients without written consent to any public forum is a violation of UTMB policy.
- UTMB is not responsible for content posted by others to UTMB social media sites. Users and visitors that share personal information on UTMB social media sites do so at their own risk; UTMB is not responsible for the public display of such private information. UTMB may remove postings to its social media sites that contain personally identifiable information, but neither UTMB, nor its licensors or contractors, are responsible for any damages.
- Members of the UTMB community may not post University of Texas System or UTMB proprietary or confidential material that is protected by copyright, trademark, or other legal standing without prior approval.
- Images, audio recordings, or videos of laboratory animals will not be posted to any social media outlet unless such posting meets the provisions as outlined in Institutional Animal Care and Use Policy #8.
- Images, video, and records of cadavers or biologic/anatomic specimens should not be posted to social media without consent.
- Every effort must be made for content (such as images, posts, videos, and comments) on UTMB official social media web properties to be accessible, to the extent allowed by the third-party hosting platform being used. Content posted on third-party sites that cannot be made accessible on those sites should be duplicated on other UTMB channels where they are accessible. For people with disabilities, web content and documents in other formats will be made available on request.
- UTMB business may not be conducted by personal email, correspondence, or personal social media.

IV. Online Code of Conduct

- When publishing content to any website or through any social media, individuals or groups within the UTMB community are not permitted to present personal opinions in ways that imply endorsement by UTMB. This includes but is not limited to product reviews/endorsements, political commentary, and guest editorials not directly related to an individual's official role with UTMB.

- All members of the university community should maintain a high standard of professionalism in all communication, whether personal or institutional, by: a) respecting the privacy of fellow UTMB faculty, staff, and students in social media postings; b) when engaging in online discourse with anyone, do so in a civil fashion; c) communicate truthfully, accurately and with integrity; and d) remember that all posts reflect on both an individual and by association, the university, and should reflect good judgment.
- Statements or acts that suggest disrespect for other employees or the public are not acceptable and violate this policy. Such unacceptable statements and acts specifically include, but are not limited to, sexual harassment, the use of racial/ethnic slurs, or other stereotyping behavior, speech, or actions.
- Employees who provide health care services should avoid establishing personal social media relationships with patients. Doing so can blur professional boundaries and create confusion about the provider-patient relationship. Providers who wish to use social media to promote general information on health and health care can do so by creating separate accounts for professional use that create a firewall between one's professional and personal online presence.
- Faculty and staff who use social media to communicate with students must always maintain appropriate professional boundaries and follow established policies governing faculty/student relationships.
 - Health care professionals are often required to maintain membership with some type of professional association or certification with a board, following guidelines promulgated by a governing body related to professional ethics. Such professional guidelines may directly or indirectly address use of social media. Each health care professional affiliated with UTMB is responsible for knowing and following any professional guidelines that apply outside of their employment with UTMB; violations of professional ethics, including but not limited to those affecting licensure to practice, could negatively impact a health care professional's employment status at UTMB.
- Staff members will refrain from using or referencing their formal position when writing in a non-official capacity and should not use a UTMB email address to establish a private, personal social media presence.
- Employees may, however, use their personal social media accounts to support or communicate publicly available information about UTMB activities and programs.

V. Relevant Federal and State Statutes

Texas Administrative Code, Title 1, Chapter 206
Texas Administrative Code, Title 1, Chapter 213
Texas Business and Commerce Code, Chapter 521
Texas Government Code, Chapter 441, Subchapter L, 441.180-205
Texas Government Code, Chapter 441.180(11)
Texas Government Code, 441.187
Public Information Act, Government Code, Chapter 552
Copyright Act of 1976 (including the Digital Millennium Copyright Act)

VI. Related UTMB Policies and Procedures

IHOP - 02.19.06 - [Information Resources Security](#)

IHOP - 06.02.00 – [Maintaining Patient Confidentiality through the Appropriate Use and Disclosure of PHI](#)

IHOP - 06.02.29 - [De-Identification of PHI](#)

VII. Additional References

[Social Media Toolkit](#)

[Guidelines for UTMB Health Social Media Accounts](#)

[Standards of Conduct Guide](#)

[Institutional Animal Care and Use Policy #8](#)

[Social Media Disclaimer](#)

VIII. Dates Approved or Amended

<i>Originated: 07/07/2011</i>	
<i>Reviewed with Changes</i>	<i>Reviewed without Changes</i>
12/05/2022	03/09/2017
	05/02/2017

IX. Contact Information

Human Resources – Employee Relations
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